



Photo Enforcement

Frequently Asked Questions



The City of Tucson has implemented a traffic safety program that uses automated cameras to enforce speed and red light violations at various locations. The purpose of this program is to improve public safety in the community. The following questions and answers will help you understand the program. If you have additional questions, please contact the Tucson Police Department Traffic Section at (520) 791-4440.

Q: Is photo enforcement a new strategy?

A: No, photo speed and red light enforcement has been used in Europe, England and Canada for over twenty years. Cities in the United States have successfully implemented photo enforcement strategies for nearly as long. In the Phoenix metropolitan area, photo enforcement strategies were widely implemented in the latter 1990s. With digital technology, the effectiveness of photo enforcement has improved tremendously.

Q: What is a speed camera?

A: Speed cameras are electronic devices that are linked to a speed-measuring device, such as a radar unit. When a vehicle travels through the radar above a set speed in excess of the posted speed limit, the high-resolution digital camera captures the violation. The camera takes a photograph of the front of the vehicle to capture the driver's face and from the rear of the vehicle to photograph the license plate.

Q: Are these systems accurate?

A: Radar has been a primary speed enforcement tool for police for decades. Radar is accepted as a valid speed measuring system throughout the country. Photo radar systems utilize very narrow beams of radar deployed at specific angles to the roadway. Red light systems are able to capture the vehicle's position when a stoplight turns red to establish that a violation did occur.

Q: Does a photo enforcement system photograph every vehicle?

A: No, the only time a photograph is taken of a vehicle is when the system detects a violation. The cameras are aimed at specific locations to capture the license plate and driver of the violating vehicle. If the faces of passengers appear in the photograph, their faces are redacted in processing.

Q: Is photo enforcement effective in reducing crashes?

A: Photo enforcement has been proven effective in many communities throughout the United States and Canada, as well as Europe and England. Cities in the Phoenix Valley, including Phoenix, Scottsdale, Paradise Valley, Chandler and Mesa have reduced speeds, collisions and injuries as a result of photo enforcement. In fact, many of these jurisdictions are increasing the scope of their photo enforcement initiatives. Other states, including Texas, Colorado, Utah, California and the District of Columbia successfully utilize photo enforcement as part of their traffic safety strategy.

Q: What is the benefit of a photo enforcement strategy?

A: A comprehensive photo enforcement strategy can reduce crashes, injuries and deaths in our city. Traditional enforcement strategies depend on the ability to deploy officers into an area with the time, tools and training to make stops. These officers are often subject to other calls for service. Furthermore during the time they spent writing the ticket, others continue to commit violations in the same area. Additionally, traffic conditions can make it dangerous for the violator, officer and everyone else on the road to initiate a stop.

Photo enforcement does not require that stops be made. Violations are fairly and consistently recorded nearly every time they occur. Photo enforcement does not place anyone at risk, but the violator usually is aware they have been caught due to the flash of the system. This provides immediate deterrent to the violator. Photo enforcement provides an increased certainty that enforcement will occur.

Q: Will photo enforcement replace police officers doing traffic enforcement?

A: Photo enforcement will enhance the work that traffic officers already do. It is not intended to replace the expectation that officers actively enforce traffic violations. Photo enforcement allows officers to focus their efforts in areas without a photo system. There is no plan to reduce the expectation that officers will enforce traffic violations if a photo enforcement strategy is adopted.

Q: Is speeding really that big of a problem in Tucson?

A: Yes, it is. Excessive speed was the fatal contributing factor in about 20% of traffic fatalities. Failure to reduce or control speed is the highest single cause of all crashes in Tucson. Although this also considers those following too closely, speed is a factor.

Q: Where will the Photo Radar Van be deployed and why?

A: A primary responsibility of the Radar Van will be to ensure the safety of our children in school zones. This will be accomplished by deploying the van in various school zones throughout the City. Outside of the school zone hours the van will be deployed in areas known for their high frequency of collisions. These areas will be determined through the analysis of crash statistics compiled from the previous 12 months. The location of the Radar Van will be made public on the Tucson Police Department's web site.

Q: At what speed will I receive a ticket?

A: Because of factors that include vehicle speedometers that might not all be precisely calibrated, changing traffic conditions and the fact that drivers must pay attention to many things besides the speedometer, it is not reasonable to expect that every vehicle will be traveling exactly the speed limit. As a result, tickets will not be issued unless a vehicle is traveling faster than 10 mph over the posted speed limit.

Studies have shown that a driver's chance of being involved in a crash doubles when they exceed the speed limit by 10 mph. Drivers who are exercising reasonable care will have no problem keeping their speed within 10 mph of the posted limit.

Q: At what speed will I receive a ticket in a marked school zone?

A: The lawful speed in a school zone when the school zone signs are in place is 15 mph. Passing is also prohibited in a school zone. Tickets for speeding in a school zone, which carries an enhanced fine, will be issued to vehicles traveling 5 mph over the posted limit.

Q: I just received a speeding ticket in the mail. Can I review the photos of the violation?

A: Photos of speeding violations are available for you to view by logging onto www.ViolationInfo.com and entering the notice number and pin located in the red boxes in the section of the ticket that shows the violation photos. Once logged on, you will be able to view enlargements of the photos that were taken at the time of the violation. The data bar on the violation photo contains information on location, posted speed limit and vehicle speed for your review. These photos will be presented in court along with records indicating system accuracy. . If you have difficulty viewing the photos, please contact the Tucson Police Traffic Section at (520) 791-4440 and arrangements will be made for you to view the information.

Q: How do red light cameras work?

A: Red light cameras are systems installed at intersections and continuously monitor for red light violations. The cameras are activated by sensors, which detect when a vehicle runs the red light. The cameras will have the capability to take high-resolution photographs of the vehicle license plate and driver. Images of the vehicle are captured as it proceeds through the red light. Images of the vehicle entering the intersection against the red light, as it proceeds through the intersection, the license plate and a photograph of the driver are available for the violator to view. When making right turns on a red light, the vehicle must make a complete and discernable stop, prior to the point of violation, and then may proceed through when traffic has cleared and it is safe to do so. All intersections with red light cameras will be clearly marked with signs indicating that the intersection is photo enforced.

The red light systems in Tucson will have the capability to establish the vehicle's speed as it goes through the intersection. As a result, vehicles speeding and / or running the red light will be detected. Speeding through intersections contributes to both the number and severity of crashes in Tucson.

Q: What happens if I'm in the intersection when the light changes color?

A: You will only receive a ticket if you enter the intersection after the signal turns red. According to the law, a vehicle must stop when facing a red light before entering the intersection. Entering the intersection is defined as the vehicle passing the lateral prolongation of the curb line, or the line between the curbs on each side of the street. If you have passed this line when the light turns red, you are legally in the intersection. It is good driving practice to not speed up into an intersection in an attempt to be past the curb extensions when the light turns red. All of the yellow lights in Tucson comply with federal standards for yellow light length. This means that if you are traveling the speed limit, adequate time exists for you to go through the intersection at a constant speed before the light turns red or for you to safely stop before the red light. As the driver, you will need to make the judgment as to which is the best course of action. If you feel you have to speed through an intersection, one of the most dangerous places to speed, you should consider a safe stop as an alternative.

Q: Has the City shortened the timing of any yellow lights for this program?

A: No. City traffic engineers have set the timing of all lights in the City of Tucson. Traffic engineers follow established guidelines set by the Institute for Transportation Engineers and adopted by the Federal Highway Administration in the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The yellow phases have been consistent for several years prior to the installation of photo red light equipment and are continually monitored to ensure consistency and safety.

Q: Can I turn right on a red light at a photo red light intersection?

A: Yes, but only if not specifically prohibited by a sign or traffic control device, and after your vehicle comes to a complete stop. Many times drivers who turn on red lights create hazardous situations for pedestrians attempting to cross the street. Drivers who do not come to a complete stop, stop within the crosswalk itself or do not yield to pedestrians prior to turning right may also be cited.

Q: Can I receive tickets for other offenses besides speeding and red light running?

A: Drivers found to be in violation of the mandatory seat belt law or expired registration can also be ticketed. These violations will only be detected if a photo is taken pursuant to a red light or speed violation. Wearing seat belts is the single most important thing you can do to ensure your safety in a crash.

Q: Does a Police Officer review my complaint before it is mailed?

A: Yes. Every violation is reviewed by a Tucson Police Officer prior to a ticket being issued. The Officer confirms the elements of the violation ensuring that there are grounds to believe a violation was committed, confirms the plate is readable and the driver is identifiable. The officer compares the photograph of the driver to the driver's license photo when possible. If there are reasonable grounds to believe an offense was committed and the person driving the vehicle is the one named, the officer places their name and badge number on the ticket and authorizes it to be issued. We believe that review of the violation by a trained police officer is critical in ensuring integrity in the process.

Q: Who receives the ticket?

A: The Arizona Traffic Ticket and Complaint is often mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle based on a comparison of the registered owner's information with the driver of the vehicle. If police are able to determine that driver other than the registered owner was operating the vehicle at the time of the violation; the ticket will be mailed to that driver.

Q: Can I contest a photo enforcement ticket?

A: The state carries the burden of proving the violation by a preponderance of the evidence. This is the same standard that is required if you were to be stopped by an officer and cited. You can ask for a hearing and the state is required to provide evidence that the photo enforcement equipment was working properly, that the violation occurred and you were responsible for the violation. The fact that a citation is issued based on photographic evidence does not relieve the state from providing the standard of proof required by the court for conviction.

Q: What is photo enforcement "Arizona Traffic Ticket and Complaint"?

A: The Arizona Traffic Ticket and Complaint, which is commonly referred to as a citation, is mailed when the reviewing police officer has reasonable grounds to believe the person named in the complaint was driving the vehicle. This document will bear the name of the person the officer has reasonable grounds to believe was driving as well as the name of the reviewing police officer. This form has been approved by the Arizona State Supreme Court for use with Tucson's Photo Traffic Enforcement Program.

Q: I just received a red light ticket in the mail. Can I review the photos and video that will be presented in court?

A: You may view both the photos and video of your violation by logging on at www.ViolationInfo.com and entering your notice number and pin. These numbers are located in the red boxes in the section of the ticket that shows the still photographs. Once you have logged on, you will be able to view enlargements of the photos contained in the ticket as well as a video of the violation. A DIVX program is required for viewing and can be downloaded from the web site free of charge.

If you have difficulty viewing the photos or video, please contact the Tucson Police Traffic Section at (520) 791-4440 and arrangements will be made for you to view the information.

The photos are designed to show that when your vehicle crossed the prolongation of the curb line, the light was red. The data bar on the top of the still photo will show the vehicle speed, the length of the amber light and how long the light had been red in tenths of seconds prior to the vehicle passing the prolongation of the curb line. This is the information that will be presented in court, along with the video and records indicating system accuracy.

Q: Am I obligated to respond to the “Arizona Traffic Ticket and Complaint”?

A: To avoid personal service of the complaint at your expense, you must respond by the court date by either appearing in court, paying the fine, requesting a hearing or enrolling in defensive driving school if you are eligible. If you fail to respond, then personal service is required as the offense carries the same penalties as a citation personally given to you by a police officer. The cost of this service will be in addition to any other costs associated with the offense.

If you fail to respond after process has been served, you will be subject to default. A default judgment can result in the assessment of a fine, surcharge and fees and the suspension of your driver license.

Q: What is a “Notice of Violation”?

A: A “Notice of Violation” is sent to the registered owner of a vehicle when the officer reviewing the incident cannot establish reasonable grounds to believe that a particular person was driving. A “Notice of Violation” is not a summons to appear. You are asked to identify the driver of the vehicle. The Police Department will attempt to verify if the person you identified was driving the vehicle. If reasonable grounds exist, a citation will be sent to that person.

Q: Are license plate sprays and covers that are advertised and sold to prevent photography of plates by photo detection cameras prohibited by law?

A: Depending on the product, they may be illegal. Arizona law (ARS 28-2354) requires that, "A person shall maintain each license plate so it is clearly legible." The sprays and covers themselves are not illegal. The act of displaying an illegible or obscured license plate is against the law. An officer who observes a vehicle with a license plate that is not clearly readable may issue a ticket for this offense. In addition to this, many of the products on the market are ineffective in obscuring the license plate from being legible in photographs taken by cameras with today's digital technology and procedures.

Q: I get the feeling that photo enforcement is “big brother” watching me all the time.

A: The only time a photograph is taken is if a violation is detected. Unless you commit a violation, the system will not activate and take your photograph. If a photo is taken, the faces of any passengers are redacted as a matter of policy. Photo enforcement systems do increase the certainty that those who commit violations will have to deal with their behavior.

Q: Where can I get more information on photo enforcement programs?

A: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has several documents on photo enforcement accessible on the Internet. Similarly, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety maintains information on photo enforcement. Questions may also be directed to the Police Department web site or to the Traffic Section at 791-4440.

Q: Can my personal information be compromised through a photo enforcement system?

A: The only time any information is captured is if a violation occurs. The information available to the vendor is limited to identifying who is the registered owner of the vehicle along with a photograph of the car and the driver. Vendor employees are security checked and the hardware as well as the software typically used by the industry prevents information from being copied or disseminated. Law enforcement throughout the country successfully employs private vendors for this work.

Q: Are points assessed against my driver's license for photo enforcement convictions?

A: Yes. In accordance with Arizona Administrative Code R17-4-404, Driver Point System, the Motor Vehicle Division assesses points for each conviction reported to them by the Court. Each red light conviction is assigned two points and each speed conviction is assigned three points.

Q: Can I avoid points being assessed against my driver's license for photo enforcement convictions by attending a defensive driving class?

A: Yes. If you are eligible to attend the NTSI Defensive Driving Program, you may be able to attend traffic school and avoid points being assessed against your license.

Q: What if I want to request a hearing or attend Defensive Driving School?

A: Please sign the chosen option, C or D, and mail this portion to:

**Tucson City Court
P.O. Box 27210
Tucson, AZ 85726-7210**

Q: When I receive a Traffic Ticket and Complaint, how long do I have to respond to the Court (Options A, C or D on the complaint) or to the Police (Option B)?

A: All option selections must be received by the appropriate agency on or before the court date, which is listed on the face of the actual ticket.

Q: What happens if I fail to respond by the court date?

A: Once the court date has past, a process server will be notified. You will be subject to personal service of the Complaint and Summons and the cost of personal service will be assessed to you. In addition, you will be subject to a default judgment, the assessment of a fine, surcharges and fees and the suspension of your driver license.

Q: What if I was not driving the vehicle at the time of the violation, but still received a ticket?

A: Carefully read, complete and submit the Affidavit of Non-Responsibility (Option B) found on page one of the Arizona Ticket and Complaint packet. This information must be received on or before your Court date, which is stated on the face of the ticket. You should submit the name and address of the person responsible for the violation and return it to the Tucson Police address shown on the ticket. If the information is acceptable, the violation will be taken out of your name and the ticket will be re-issued with the information provided on the affidavit. If the vehicle had been reported stolen at the time of the violation, the owner must submit a copy of the filed police report with a signed Affidavit of Non-Responsibility.

Q: Where do I mail my Affidavit of Non-Responsibility?

A: Sign the front and mail Option B, which has the notice number on the back, along with a clear copy of your driver's license to:

**Tucson Police Department
Photo Enforcement Unit
1310 W. Miracle Mile
Tucson, AZ 85705**

Q. How much money can the city expect to make and retain from photo enforcement?

A. Photo enforcement programs are not designed to generate revenue. Agencies in Arizona that have photo enforcement systems consistently report that the system operates at a loss. A common misconception is that the fines from citations stay with the city. In fact, around 50% of traffic fines go directly to the state. The photo enforcement program is mostly cost neutral. If there are any revenues left over after all expenses have been paid, those revenues are placed in the city's general fund.

Q: Where can I get help with my photo safety ticket or ask additional questions?

A: Customer service can be reached toll free: Monday - Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
Call: **(866) 790-4111**.

Q: What is the amount of the fine?

A: Red Light violation in Tucson is \$280.00. No Seat Belt violation in Tucson is \$48.00
Expired Registration violation in Tucson is \$600.00 – this fine amount may be reduced to \$123.00 if you register your vehicle before your court date. Fines for speed violations in Tucson are tiered based on how many miles per hour the violator is traveling over the posted speed:

MPH Over Posted	Fine
0-10	151.00
11-15	191.00
16-20	208.00
21-25	234.00
26-30	248.00
31 and over	366.00

Speeding in a school zone (28-797E) carries a fine of \$280.00. This is for any speed and is different than the tiered fine schedule for speeding in other areas.

Q: Where do I mail my payment?

A: Mail your check, money order or cashier’s check payable to Tucson City Court, along with the tear-off coupon (Option A) in the enclosed envelope, making sure the payment side shows through the envelope window. If you choose to pay by Visa, MC or Discover, please fill out the credit card information on the back of Option A. **Do not mail cash.**
Write your Notice Number on the check.

Tucson City Court
P.O. Box 27210
Tucson, AZ 85726-7210

Q: Can I pay my fine in person?

A: You may also pay in person at the Tucson City Court, - 103 E. Alameda, Tucson, AZ 85701 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Q: Can I pay my fine online?

A: Yes. Go to www.tucsonaz.gov/courts. Click on "E-Services" located at the top of the screen. Scroll down to "Police and Courts" and select "Pay Traffic and Parking Tickets." Log in by using your Complaint Number and proceed as directed.

Q: Where can I get questions I may have about Tucson's photo enforcement program answered, or obtain additional information on a ticket or notice of violation?

A: Call the Tucson Police Department Traffic Section at (520) 791-4440 during business hours. We will assist you in any way possible.